

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 13206

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREP, RP, VN

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ABOARD THE USNS HUDSON

REF: (A) MANILA 13034; (B) MANILA 13092; (C) MANILA 13140;
(D) MANILA 13157

1. SUMMARY. IN VIEW OF GOP SENSITIVITY OVER THE HUDSON CASE, WASHINGTON AGENCIES ARE URGED TO RESOLVE SPONSORSHIP ISSUES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO TO STRINGENTLY LIMIT THE PERIOD OF TIME THESE REFUGEES MUST REMAIN IN THE PHILIPPINES. SHOULD ANOTHER HUDSON-TYPE REFUGEE PICK-UP ARISE, EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT DIRECT CONVEYANCE OF THE REFUGEES TO GUAM, RATHER THAN EFFORTS TO LAND THEM IN PHILIPPINES, MIGHT BETTER SERVE OVERALL U.S. INTERESTS IN THE AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY GREATLY APPRECIATES DEPARTMENT'S EXTRA EFFORTS IN OBTAINING AND PROVIDING UNCONDITIONAL U.S. GUARANTEE FOR ONWARD PLACEMENT OUTSIDE THE PHILIPPINES OF THE 47 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES LANDED IN MANILA AUGUST 28 BY THE USNS HUDSON. WE ARE CONTINUING TO PRESS OFFICE OF UNHCR REP HERE CONCERNING POSSIBLE THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT. WE WOULD NOTE HOWEVER THAT UNHCR OFFICE MANILA IS NOW STAFFED ONLY BY A PHILIPPINE SECRETARY SINCE DAHR DEPARTED AUGUST 27, AND REPORTED REPLACEMENT, BLATTER, HAS NOT ARRIVED.

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BECAUSE OF THE CLEAR GOP SENSITIVITIES ABOUT THIS

CASE, WE WOULD URGE THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO LOCATE SPONSORS FOR REFUGEES IN QUESTION IN ORDER TO STRINGENTLY LIMIT THE PERIOD THEY WILL HAVE TO REMAIN IN THE PHILIPPINES.

3. GOP SENSITIVITY ABOUT HUDSON CASE IS MANIFEST IN TEXT OF DFA NOTE AND IN INFORMAL DFA COMMENTS TO EMBASSY (REFTELS A AND C). THIS SENSITIVITY ALSO EVIDENT IN GOP HANDLING OF CASE--E.G. PHIL LIAISON OFFICER IN SUBIC, ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM DFA, REFUSED TO CLEAR HUDSON'S DEPARTURE FROM SUBIC FOR PORT OF MANILA UNTIL DFA PHYSICALLY HAD IN HAND OUR NOTE PROVIDING U.S. UNCONDITIONAL GUARANTEE OF RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES OUTSIDE THE PHILIPPINES. EVEN AFTER NOTE DELIVERED ON MORNING AUGUST 28, DFA INSISTED THAT NOTE BE REVISED TO INCLUDE A STATEMENT THAT U.S. EMBASSY WILL GUARANTEE THE REFUGEES' EXPENSES WHILE IN THE FABELLA CENTER. WE AGREED TO THIS CHANGE IN ORDER TO OBIVIATE FURTHER DELAY IN LANDING THE REFUGEES.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT THE ESSENTIAL REASON FOR THE GOP'S SPECIAL CONCERN ABOUT HUDSON CASE IS GOP FEELING THAT THEY ARE BEING OVERWHELMED WITH REFUGEES IN RECENT MONTHS AND THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PUT IN A POSITION OF DOING MORE THAN WHAT THEY REGARD AS THEIR FAIR SHARE IN TERMS OF ACCEPTING REFUGEES. A QUICK REVIEW OF OUR RECORDS INDICATES THAT MORE THAN 400 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN 17 BOATS HAVE LANDED HERE SINCE THE END OF MARCH (A DETAILED REPORT WILL BE PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO STATE 213600). THE HUDSON IN A SENSE, THUS, WAS "A LAST STRAW" WHICH SERVED TO PRECIPITATE FURTHER A GROWING GOP ANTI-REFUGEE SENTIMENT. SINCE THE HUDSON IS A USNS, THE GOP PERCEIVED THIS GROUP OF REFUGEES AS ONE FOR WHICH THE USG SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY AND FULLY RESPONSIBLE AND PROBABLY RESENTED RAHTER STRONGLY OUR EFFORTS TO ADD TO THEIR INCREASING CASELOAD. GOP OFFICIALS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY ASKING WHY IN THIS CASE, WHEN WE ARE PREPARED TO GUARANTEE RESETTLEMENT, WE WERE NOT WILLING TO TAKE THE REFUGEES TO A USG FACILITY (E.G. ON GUAM) WHERE THEY COULD PROBABLY BE BETTER CARED FOR
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THAN IN THE CROWDED MANILA CENTER.

5. IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, SHOULD ANOTHER HUDSON-TYPE CASE ARISE IN THE FUTURE, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT EVERY CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO LANDING THE REFUGEES AT GUAM RATHER THAN SEEKING TO HAVE THEM ACCEPTED BY THE PHILIPPINES. AS A RESULT OF THE HUDSON PRECEDENT, THE GOP WILL CERTAINLY REQUIRE UNCONDITIONAL USG GUARANTEES

RE RESETTLEMENT AS A PRE-CONDITION TOLANDING. EVEN
WITH SUCH GUARANTEES, WE CANNOT BE ASSURED THAT THE GOP
WOULD AGAIN AGREE TO TAKE REFUGEES IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.
WHILE WE RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE THE NEED TO KEEP POINT-
ING TOWARD INTERNATIONALIZATION OF INDOCHINA REFUGEE
RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS, WE TRUST DEPARTMENT WILL ALSO BEAR
IN MIND OTHER IMPORTANT U.S. INTERESTS HERE WHICH TEND
TO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE STRAINS INDUCED BY CASES
SUCH AS THE RECENT HUDSON EPISODE.
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